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Conference Abstract

Size Doesn't Matter: Fundamental Requirements in Relocating a Herbarium.

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Abstract

Relocating a natural history collection is a daunting prospect. Underpinning successful relocation is getting the fundamentals right. From the moment the seed of an idea for a new facility is planted, a raft of detailed planning and preparation issues emerge. Meticulous planning and management is essential, from initial design through to the last specimen being housed in its new location.

Herbaria are complex organisms each with a core collection of specimen sheets and associated infrastructure to house them; ancillary collections such as 'spirit' and 'DNA', a library, databasing, mounting, materials, imaging, loans and exchange, facilities for environmental control, biosecurity, space for staff, volunteers, research students, and class or public access and outreach. All these elements require careful consideration for relocation regardless of the size of the collection.

Timelines for relocations from initial decisions to commencement of the move vary widely. Early involvement of core herbarium staff is critical to managing risks to the integrity of the collection during a move. Success of the operation can be gauged immediately after the move and again, much later, based on feedback on the operation of the facility and whether planned expansion will meet future needs. All these considerations are important and essentially the same, irrespective of distance of relocation or size of the collection.

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We will discuss the fundamental issues of herbarium relocation based on two recent case studies.The Western Australian Herbarium moved from its 1970s home to a modern, purpose-built, best practice facility incorporating innovative design features in 2011 with c. 800,000 specimens. The John T. Waterhouse Herbarium at UNSW Sydney (The University of New South Wales) moved c. 66,000 specimens in October 2017 from within a 1962 departmental building, to a modern, purpose-built facility, incorporating significant improvements, as part of a much larger relocation of its School. We will provide a guide to assist future relocations, both imminent (such as the N.C.W. Beadle Herbarium at the University of New England (>100,000 specmens), and the National Herbarium of New South Wales, >1,400,000 specimens) and for those yet to be considered.

This will be a presentation on behalf of the Managers of Australasian Herbarium Collections (MAHC), a network of herbarium Collection Managers in Australia and New Zealand.

Keywords

herbarium, collection, specimen, relocation, design, modern, purpose built, best practice, innovation, MAHC

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